

VZCZCXR08713
RR RUEHROV RUEHTRO
DE RUEHKH #0214/01 0390931
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 080930Z FEB 10
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0136
INFO IGAD COLLECTIVE
UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RHMFSS/CJTF HOA

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000214

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [KPKO](#) [MOPS](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: Sudan: UNMIS SRSG Describes UN Elections Prep in Farewell to Diplomatic Corps

¶1. Summary: Ashraf Qazi, the UN Secretary General's Special Representative (SRSG) and head of the UN Mission to Sudan (UNMIS), assembled Chiefs of Mission and top aid representatives on February 3 to say goodbye and to preview UN arrangements for the April 2011 elections. Qazi emphasized that the UN's priority, to support the National Electoral Commission (NEC) to deliver ballots to polling places, would strain resources; nonetheless, the UN would do what it could to support donor countries' election observation efforts. Additional funds are needed to provide elections training for 5,000 police recruits in the South, and others in the North. Meeting participants suggested close coordination between the UN and donor countries fielding observation missions on contentious issues such as refused or late-issued travel permits. End Summary

¶2. During the February 3 meeting, SRSG Gazi announced that he would depart the following week, and that his successor Haile Menkarios, whom he described as strong and experienced, would arrive in early March. He also introduced Principal Deputy SRSG Jasbir Lidder Singh as the official in charge of the day-to-day operations of UNMIS during the interim period.

UN Priority To Support NEC

¶3. Qazi emphasized that the UN's priority in the April elections must be to support the NEC by helping to move ballots, ballot boxes, polling booths and other election-related materials to polling places. With over 1,268 different types of ballot papers to be delivered throughout the country, the logistical arrangements will be extremely complicated and strain UN resources. Nonetheless, where possible, the UN will do what it can to support donor countries' election observation efforts. Lidder urged that countries asking for assistance notify the UN about their requirements as early as possible.

¶4. A UN elections officer told the group that logistical arrangements had been complicated by the fact that the NEC had not yet announced key elements such as how registered voters will be allocated to the polling centers, how voters themselves will know to which polling center to go; how the military and internally displaced persons (IDPs) will vote, and how civic and voter education will be conducted.

Mitigation Efforts Underway At Flashpoints

¶15. Summing up security matters in advance of the election, Rajendra Joshi, Chief of the UN Security and Safety Section, told the group that the fact that there had been no major clashes between Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signatories constituted a major accomplishment. Other security-related accomplishments include what he said was complete redeployment of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) out of the South. According to Joshi, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) had achieved only 35 percent redeployment of its forces in the North. He added that 32,723 soldiers are now in the Joint Integrated Units (JIUs), which is 82 percent of the planned target strength of 40,000. However, Joshi warned, the potential for clashes between SAF and SPLA had not been eliminated, nor had the future of the JIUs following the 2011 referendum on independence for the south as yet been determined.

¶16. The UN is monitoring for potential flashpoints, a UN security official pointed out. Constant engagement, reporting of violations and negotiation have served to mitigate CPA-related conflict. The UN has increased patrolling to gather information and as a deterrent in the migration-related flashpoints in Abyei and Unity

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State, where the Misseriya exercise grazing rights, and in tribal-related flashpoints in Warrab and Unity States, and near Malakal, Kadugli, Kurmuk, Bor and Torit,

¶17. Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)-related incidents peaked in March and September of 2009, followed by steady decreases, with only one incident reported in December 2009 and none in January 2010. According to a UN official, this is the result of a substantial degradation of LRA logistics and leadership capabilities, and a shift of LRA operations from West and East Equatoria to Western Bahr El Ghazal. He added that the LRA is no longer a military threat.

Additional Funds Needed for Police Election Training

¶18. For the election, the UN has decided to deploy election security officers in areas where there is no UNMIS presence, such as north of Khartoum.

¶19. UN police officials also addressed the group. The UN is conducting electoral security training for the police in both the North and the South, with better results in the North. They said the South lacks equipment, and that 5,000 southern police recruits are currently awaiting training. More funding is needed so that additional police can be trained in both the North and the South in advance of the elections.

¶10. Those in the meeting asked for information as to who within the UN system would coordinate observation missions, and suggested that countries fielding observation missions coordinate closely on issues such as refused or late issued travel permits.

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